

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1362

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 2047

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MV

SUBJ:U.S. POLICY TOWARD MALDIVES

REF: COLOMBO 2000, COLOMBO 676, COLOMBO 3289, DECEMBER 21 1972,
STATE 86241

1. SUMMARY: U.S.-MALDIVES RELATIONS ARE GOOD.
GOM IS FOLLOWING BALANCED FOREIGN POLICY WHICH
USG SOULD ENCOURAGE WHEN AND IF POSSIBLE. WHILE
REACHING OUT TO COUNTRIES NEARBY, GOM WISHES
MAINTAIN BALANCE AND AVOID OVERDEPENDENCE ON
ANYONE. U.S. NAVAL VISITS ON VERY LIMITED
SCALE WOULD BE WELCOMED AND SHOULD BE SCHEDULED.
PROVISION OF INTER-ATOLL RADIO EQUIPMENT WAS
WELCOMED BY PRIME MINSTER. EDUCATION MINISTER
MADE NEW REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE FOR LABORTARY
EQUIPMENT FOR GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOLS WHICH
WE SHOULD CONSIDER SYMPATHETICALLY. EMBASSY
RECOMMENDS THAT SEPARATE IV PROGRAM BE
ESTABLISHED FOR MALDIVES AND THAT PROVISION
OF EDUCATIONAL AND INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS BE
USIS CONTINUE. END SUMMARY.

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2. AMBASSADOR'S TRIP TO MALDIVES JULY 5-8

DEMONSTRATED THAT ALTHOUGH MALDIVIAN GOVERNMENT HAS REACHED OUT TO EXPAND ITS CONTACTS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES, IT IS DETERMINED TO MAINTAIN ITS INDEPENDENCE AND SEEKS TO AVOID POLITICAL OR ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE ON ANY ONE COUNTRY. MALDIVIANS ALSO BELIEVE COUNTRIES IN THEIR IMMEDIATE AREA, OTHER THAN UNITED KINGDOM WHICH HAS SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP BECAUSE OF RAF GAN, ARE OF MOST IMPORTANCE TO THEM. THEY THEREFORE ARE SEEKING TO EXPAND RELATIONS WITH ALL OF THEM -- INDIA, PAKISTAN, SRI LANKA, AND SINGAPORE. WE BELIEVE THIS IS SENSIBLE APPROACH WHICH USG SHOULD DISCREETLY ENCOURAGE AND REINFORCE TO SMALL EXTENT WE ARE ABLE TO DO SO.

3. U.S.-MALDIVIAN RELATIONS CONTINUE TO BE VERY LIMITED BUT CORDIAL. PRIME MINISTER SPECIFICALLY SAID HE WAS PLEASED TO HAVE VISIT BY USS LA SALLE AND INDICATED U.S. NAVAL SHIP VISITS ONCE EACH YEAR BUT NO MORE THAN TWICE WOULD BE WELCOMED. HE AND OTHER OFFICIALS WERE GENUINELY PLEASED TO RECEIVE INTER-ATOLL RADIO EQUIPMENT AND CONSIDER IT WELCOME ASSET. EDUCATION MINISTER MADE STRONG PLEA TO AMBASSADOR FOR ASSISTANCE IN UPGRADING EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM TO GCE "A" (12TH GRADE) LEVEL AND EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER EFFORT SECURITY SITUATION IN LEBANON MIGHT HAVE ON MALDIVIAN STUDENTS STUDYING AT AMERICAN UNIVERSITY BEIRUT.

4. USG HAS HAD CONSIDERABLE DIFFICULTY RESPONDING TO PAST MALDIVIAN REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE. THIS HAS BEEN DUE TO MALDIVIAN REQUESTS FOR GRANT AID IN ORDER TO AVOID FOREIGN DEBT AND LEGISLATIVE RESTRICTIONS OF U.S. AID PROGRAM. FOR VARIOUS REASONS, US HAS TURNED DOWN REQUESTS FOR ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, FOOD AID, INTER-ATOLL BOATS (OTHER THAN ILL-FATED WHALE BOAT), PEACE CORPS PROGRAM, AND ASSISTANCE FOR AIR MALDIVES. CARE SCHOOL- FEEDLING PROGRAM DIED ABORNING DUE TO GOM'S INABILITY TO ABORNB LOCAL COSTS. WE HAVE PROVIDED RADIO LINK-UP BETWEEN COLOMBO AND MALE WHICH CONTINUES TO WORK WELL, AND FIVE SCHOLARSHIPS FROM AID REGIONAL FUNDS FOR MALDIVIAN STUDENTS TO ATTEND AUB. WHILE THEY DO NOT PRESS POINT, MALDIVIANS DO LET US KNOW THAT

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THEY WISH LARGE AND PROPEROUS COUNTRY LIKE U.S. WOULD PROVIDE GREATER LARGESSE TO SMALL AND POOR COUNTRY SUCH AS THEIRS.

5. WE BELIEVE IT IS IN U.S. INTEREST TO MAINTAIN CONTINUED VERY LIMITED RELATIONSHIP WITH MALDIVES AND TO RESPOND TO APPROPRIATE REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE WHENEVER POSSIBLE. WITH INCREASED U.S. NAVAL PRESENCE IN INDIAN OCEAN IT MAY ALSO BE IN OUR INTEREST TO ESTABLISH PATTERN OF NAVAL VISITS IN MALDIVES.

PRIME MINISTER ZAKI HAS INDICATED GOM WOULD WELCOME SUCH VISITS AND EMBASSY BELIVES ONE VISIT BY U.S. NAVAL VESSEL TO MALE EACH YEAR, PREFERABLY IN OCTOBE, APRIL, OR MAY, WOULD BE USEFUL. THIS WOULD RAISE PROBLEM, HOWEVER, OF MAKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR PORT CALL WHICH RECENT VISIT BY AMBASSADOR DEMONSTRATED IS MORE DIFFICULT FROM LONG DISTANCE. TO SUPPORT SUCH PROGRAM OF VISITS IT WOULD BE NECESSARY FOR DEFENSE ATTACHE IN COLOMBO TO BE ALSO ACCREDITED TO GOM TO PROVIDE BASIS FOR WORKING RELATIONSHIP AND NAILING DOWN SCHEDULE AND OTHER ARRANGEMENTS FOR VISIT. VISITS NEED NOT NECESSARILY COINCIDE WITH VISITS BY AMBASSADOR OR OTHER EMBASSY PERSONNEL. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT ADDITIONAL ACCREDITATION OF DEFENSE ATTACHE AND REGULAR CALLS BY U.S. NAVAL SHIPS, HOWEVER LIMITED, MAY RAISE DEMANDS OR EXPECTATIONS FOR ASSISTANCE TO WHICH USG WOULD BE UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO RESPOND. HOWEVER, OTHER COUNTRIES -UNITED KINGDOM, FRANCE, ISRAEL, PAKISTAN, AND USSR - HAVE DEFENSE ATTACES ACCREDITED TO MALDIVES WHICH WOULD REDUCE OUR VISIBILITY. WE BELIEVE PROBLEM OF ENHANCED EXPECTATIONS, IF IT ARISES, WOULD BE MANAGEABLE AND THAT BENEFITS WOULD OUTWEIGHT DISADVANTAGES.

6. IN EDUCATION FIELD, WE WOULD AKS THAT WASHINGTON EXAMINE SYMPATHETICALLY REQUEST FOR LABORATORY EQUIPMENT FOR TWO SCHOOLS. THIS WOULD PROVIDE SIGNIFICANT GESTURE ON PART OF U.S. AND WOULD ENABLE US TO CONTINUE TO RESPOND IN LIMITED FASHION TO SOME OF MANY REQUESTS GOM MAKES TO US FOR ASSISTANCE. IF USG COULD PROVIDE THIS EQUIPMENT WE WOULD SEND OFFICER FROM COLOMBO TO MALE TO EXAMINE REQUEST MORE CLOSELY. GOM PLAN TO UPGRADE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM TO COJPELTIOH OF HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL MAKES GREAT DEAL OF SENSE AND IS PROGRAM WE SHOULD, IF AT ALL POSSIBLE, SUPPORT. PLEASE LET US KNOW PROSPECTS OF PROVIDING SUCH ASSISTANCE. ALSO IT APPARS LIKELY THAT MALDIVIAN STUDENTS PRESENTLY AT AMERICAN UNIVERSITY, BEIRUT (AUB) WILL B ALLOWED TO COMPLETE
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STUDIES. HOWEVER, SHOULD GOM DECIDE NOT TO FOLLOW UP WITH MORE CANDIDATES FOR AUB, AS IT DID LAST FALL, WE MAY WISH TO EXPLORE OTHER ALTERNATIVES OF ASSISTANCE IN EDUCATION. HOWEVER, FOR PRESENT, POSSIBILITIES OF EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM WHICH WERE DISCUSSED WITH GOM ON BISIS STATE 86421 ARE BEING HELD IN ABEYANCE. EDUCATION MINISTER HAS WRITTEN AMBASSADOR SAYING THAT GOM PREFERS CONCENTRATE ON IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN MALDIVES RATHER THAN SENDING ADDITIONAL STUDENTS ABROAD FOR TRAINING.

7. WE CONTINUE TO BELIVE THAT ONE IVP GRANT EACH YEAR FOR MALDIVIAN CANDIDATE WOULD BE IN U.S. INTEREST. ALTHOUGH DEPARTMENT RESPONDED FAVORABLY TO PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATION THAT PROGRAM BE ESTABLISHED (STATE 33268, FEBRUARY NLWEN 1973), IT WAS ONLY ON BASIS THAT FUNDS FOR GRANTS BE TAKEN FROM SRI LANKA PROGRAM.

AS SRI LANKA PROGRAM WAS
AEEUCED FROM REQUESTED LEVEL, EMBASSY
WAS UNABLE TO PROGRAM MALDIVIANS LAST YEAR. WE RECOM END
DEPARTMENT RECONSIDER DECISION THAT MALDIVIAN GRANTEE COME FROM
SRI LANKA PROGRAM AND ESTABLISH SEPARATE PROGRAM FOR MALDIVES
WITH FUNDING FOR AT LEAST ONE GRANT.

8. ON INFORMATION SIDE, WE RECOMMEND CONTINUATION OF USIS BOOK-
PRESENTATIN PROGRAM FOR ENGLISH-LANGUAGE SCHOOLS AND DISTRIBUTIO
OF INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS ON U.S. FOREIGN POLICY. THERE ARE MANY
COUNTIRES ACTIVE IN MALE PUSHING HARD TO GAIN ACCEPTANCE OF POSITIONS
UNHELPFUL TO U.S. PROVISION OF U.S. VIEWPOINT ON THESE MATTERS
IS ESSENTIAL ELEMENT IN COUNTERING UNFRIEMDLY PROPAGANDA.

9. FINALLY, WE WOULD REITERATE USEFULNESS OF COMMERCE WATCHING
EXPANSION OF TOURIST INDUCTRY IN MALDIVES AS MARKET FOR U.S.
EXPORTS. RAPID GROWTH OF INDUSTRY CREATES DEMAD FOR EQUIPMENT
FOR WATER SPORTS, RECREATIONAL AND CAMPING EQUIPMENT, HOTEL AND
FOOD HANDLING SUPPLIES.

IN FACT, LARGE NUMBERS OF MERCURY AND JOHNSON OUTBOARD
MOTORS WERE IN EVIDENCE AT TOURIST RESORT ISLANDS,
U.S. FIRMS SHOULD BE ABLE TO OBTAIN MORE OF THIS BUSINESS.
VAN HOLLEN

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